

# The Avocet

Volume XVI, Number 8

October, 1969

## "Tides of Fundy" and "Newfoundland Sea Birds"

Wednesday, October 15, 8:00 pm

Homestead High School  
Room 5, Bldg. C

Homestead Road  
Cupertino

Through the courtesy of the Canadian Travel Film Library we are fortunate to have two fascinating color films.

"Tides of Fundy" is an absorbing study of the phenomenal tides in the Bay of Fundy on Canada's Atlantic Coast and how they affect the life of the region. The Bay of Fundy has the highest recorded tides in the world! What creates these tides? What phenomena do they cause? Reverse waterfalls! Tidal bores! You will see dinosaur footprints, basalt monoliths -- the distant past unfolding.

"Newfoundland Sea Birds" takes you to Green Island, 20 miles south of Newfoundland, for a first hand look at sea birds that come to the island during the summer to nest and raise their young: gulls, kittiwakes, murrets, puffins, terns, and many others. You will experience along with the team of naturalists the great shrill chorus of bird cries and the wary capture of various species for banding.

Co: Program Chairman, Phyllis Klein

### Calendar of Events

Board Meeting - - - - - Thurs, Oct. 2, 7:45 pm

Meet at Grace Lind's, 1615 Dry Creek Road, San Jose, tel. 266-9598.

Take Hamilton exit off Hwy 17, to Meridian, right to Dry Creek Rd.

Dumbarton Bridge - - - - - Sat, Oct. 4, 9:00 am

Meet near hunting club bldg. on NW side of bridge. Bring lunch if you wish.

Leaders, Mr. & Mrs. Las Sleeper

Bird Discussion Group - - - - - Tues, Oct. 7, 10:00 am

Topic of "Summer Birds" will be continued. At home of Eve Case, 20537 Verde Vista Ln, Saratoga, 867-4748.

Alviso - - - - - Wed, Oct. 8, 9:00 am

Meet at Geo. Mayne School in Alviso on San Jose-Alviso Rd.

Leader, Catherine Lintott 356-4264

No. County Bird Discussion Group - - - - - Thurs, Oct. 9, 9:30 am

Subject will be "plovers". Any member welcome. Meet at Mrs. Geo. Houck's, 1275 Martin Ave, Palo Alto, tel. 327-4868. Chairman, Kay McCann.

Conservation Caravan - - - - - Sat, Oct 11, 9:15 am

From Palo Alto Baylands to Castle Rock State Park to Big Basin State Park.

Free and open to the public. Use your own car; bring your family and lunch. Reservations necessary to handle the crowd. See page 52 for further details.

Leaders: Dr. Thomas Harvey, Mrs. Russel Varian, and Mr. Howard King

Wildlife Film - - - - - Mon, Oct 13, 8:00 pm

"A Naturalist Afield" by Karl H. Maslowski

at Morris-Daily Auditorium, San Jose State College. See page 54 for details.

General Meeting (see above) Wed, Oct. 15, 8:00

Palo Alto Yacht Harbor - Sun, Oct. 19, 9:00 am

Meet near Audubon Bulletin Board at Duck

Pond. Leader, Lloyd Case and colleague

Palo Alto Yacht Harbor - Wed, Oct. 22, 9:00 am

Meet at Duck Pond at end of Embarcadero Rd.

Leader, Harriet Mundy 325-1192



KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR RED BREASTED DOWITCHER

If a red-breasted bird with a colored leg band peeks over your duck blind or flies into view while you're scoping a mud flat, don't get excited. It won't be in the same class with pink elephants. The California Department of Fish and Game is capturing and color-marking shorebirds to learn about their movements, migration, and habitat needs.

"These birds, like ducks, breed in the north and winter in California and the Southern Hemisphere," explains Howard Leach, Special Wildlife Coordinator for the Dept. of Fish and Game. "Some species go as far south as South America, New Zealand and Australia. They are now threatened by the destruction of California's wetlands. The continuing reclamation of inland marshlands and the filling of coastal mud flats and tidal marshes is having an impact on their numbers."

By capturing shorebirds, dabbling their breasts with colored dye, and placing color and numbered bands on their feet, the Department hopes to make their presence known. Some 10,000 shorebirds will be caught and marked from August through the winter. Dunlin, Dowitchers, Least and Western sandpipers will be the species most easily caught. Breast coloring to be used will be: Humboldt Bay, yellow; San Francisco Bay, red; Sacramento and San Joaquin Valley, green; and San Diego Bay, blue. Different colored leg bands will tell which month they were banded. Volunteer help has been assigned to cover the major wetland areas in the state and report their findings.

Sightings of these marked birds by sportsmen and bird watchers will provide the Department with much needed information regarding the importance of California's wetlands to the continental supply of shorebirds. Such information can be used to support efforts of conservationists and sportsmen to preserve our wetlands for ducks and all forms of wildlife.

If you see one of these colored shorebirds, make a mental note of its breast coloring, and, if possible, the color of the band on its leg and which leg. Reports of sightings should be sent to the Department of Fish and Game, Special Wildlife Investigations, 1416 Ninth St., Sacramento 95814. Be sure to give the location and date of your sightings as well as the colors.

CONSERVATION CARAVAN (see front page)

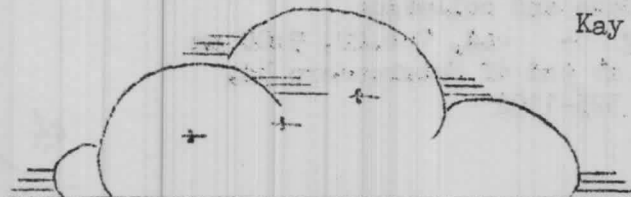
On Saturday, Oct. 11, there will be a trip from Palo Alto Baylands to Castle Rock State Park to Big Basin State Park. It is free and open to the public. Use your own car, bring your family and lunch. Reservations necessary to handle the crowd. It will be led by Dr. H. Thomas Harvey, Associate Dean of the School of Natural History and Mathematics of San Jose State College. He will be assisted by Mrs. Russell Varian, who gave the original property at Castle Rock Park to the State recently, and Mr. Howard King who is the official photographer for Save-the-Redwoods League and took the pictures for Diane Conradson's book "Exploring Our Baylands".

Meet at the Palo Alto Duck Pond, end of Embarcadero Road across from the Yacht Club at 9:15 am. and at Castle Rock at 12:30 pm. We will eat there. Castle Rock State Park is south of Route 9 on the right on Skyline Dr. Maps will be available at Palo Alto Baylands. We will end by going to Big Basin Park to see Mr. King's pictures and have a talk on the redwoods. This was our first redwood state park. Mrs. Varian will act as hostess at Castle Rock, one of the most recent

Reservations for whichever parts of the trip you plan to attend may be made by calling one of the following: Mrs. Robert J. Leonard 326-3931, Mrs. A. L. Piedmonte 327-1886, Mrs. John R. Walters 328-4755, Mrs. L. Bruce Wilner 326-7609.

We will be guests of the Palo Alto Branch of the American Association of University women.

Kay McCann



Birds of California

by  
Russ Greenberg



Late August and early September is generally a time of rapid change and turnover of bird populations. Summer residents begin moving out and a few harbingers of winter start to move through. Common western warblers are migrating with a few finches and empidonax flycatchers, while vagrant species are beginning to arrive now. The bulk of shorebirds have come and gone in the last month.

Reports of Pectorals and Baird's seem scarce this fall. The most interesting report was of a Pectoral present from Sept. 11 for at least four or five days at the pond near the Palo Alto Corporation Yard. Reported with it on the 11th was a Buff-breasted by Jill Cisne. This is an excellent record; there are few previous sightings in the state. Another rare sandpiper seen Sept. 12 and still around at time of writing was a Sharp-tailed found at Goleta by Fred Webster. The "Siberian Pectoral" has only been seen 5 previous times and can be picked out as a brighter rufous bird than Pectoral with gray-buff (adult) or bright buff (young) breast with streaking only on the side.

Point Reyes had good numbers of empidonax moving through and populations continued to change. For example on Sept. 6 there were lots of Westerns and a few Trail's; on Sept. 9 there was only Western, and Dave De Sante skillfully netted a Least for the third record of this small gray flycatcher. There are "invasion" numbers of Red-breasted Nuthatches on Pt. Reyes with reports from as unlikely spots as Deep Springs, Morongo Valley, Point Fermin. There were a few Redstarts and Black polls with the usual western warblers on the point. Migrants are in good numbers. In San Diego there have been only a couple of Blackpolls and a Black-throated Blue was seen in the Tiajuana River Valley. Morongo had two Indigo Buntings.

Fork-tailed Petrels made their appearance in the state after several years of absence. Seen in Monterey Bay all August, this formerly common petrel made its reappearance (for one boat only) on the Monterey Boat Trip Sept. 6. The other boat saw the San Diego specialty, a Least Petrel. Many Xantus Murrelets, Sabine's Gulls, and Sooty and Pink-footed Shearwaters were also seen. Gene Cardiff took a boat off Morro Bay in early September and saw two Craveri's Murrelets, one Tropicbird, and Least Petrels (better than this fall's San Diego trip).

The biggest surprise of the fall has been the invasion of Boobies. In early September there was one Blue-footed Booby at the Salton Sea. On September 8 Guy McCaskie found 28 Boobies! : 4 Brown, 24 Blue-footed. The following weekend Lorry Binford, Charlie Wellinger and the Greenbergs found 7 Brown's with 14 Blue-foots.

The rest of the fall will be good for warbler migration; look particularly for vagrants at Monterey, Point Reyes, and all coastal points between. Look in "islands of trees" isolated on the coast, protected from the wind.

Coyote Hills Regional Park - Sept. 20 - Leader, Phil Hathaway

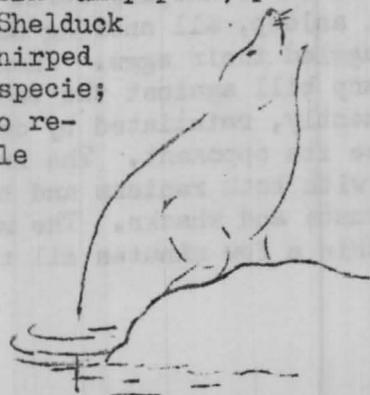
The day of the trip seemed unseasonably warm for this area with the result that we had very nearly more observers than birds. Five distant White Pelicans started off the list encouragingly. But shorebirds were confined to the small pond areas and included on Greater Yellowlegs, several Avocets and Western Sandpipers, plus an oversized docile duck fitting the description of an English Shelduck (a discarded captive or pet?). Song and Savannah Sparrows chirped furtively; one Golden-crowned Sparrow scouted ahead for its specie; and one Nashville Warbler eluded most of us. For the few who remained for lunch among the pines, a fine immature Golden Eagle circled quite low overhead displaying his distinctive white wing patches, and proceeded to harry a Turkey Vulture in the playful manner of young eagles. 36 species were tallied.

E. Curtis

Stray Field Notes:

One Yellow-breasted Chat on Sept. 17-19 at Anderson Resvr.  
First Golden-crown & White-crowned at Anderson on Sept. 17

Emelia Curtis





"Wildlife in America" - excerpts from the Sept. 9 Post article by Bil Gilbert

"We are eliminating species infinitely faster than they are created by evolutionary processes. In North America we have lost more species in the last 100 years than Europe has in the past 1,000." . . .

"At the moment, research is the principal activity in the rare-and-endangered-species program for the good reason that not much is known about most of the animals except that they are scarce." . . .

"Behind all controversy over endangered animals, the coyotes, deer, poisoned wildlife, displaced wildlife, lurks the question, 'Why bother?' The challenge has been phrased as 'Who are we for, people or birds?' or as 'What are 43 Whooping Cranes good for?' Recently it has been taken up by analysts whose interests are more sociological than biological. Wildlife, runs their argument, is no longer of much direct economic importance. We don't need it for food. And, with a few relatively unimportant exceptions, we don't need to protect ourselves from it." . . .

"Many scientists, who are anything but sentimentalists, claim that perhaps the most important use of wildlife is as a delicate measure of what we are doing to the environment that we share. 'If we are creating an environment that is lethal for, say, a cardinal, then we should be warned, not so much for the cardinal's sake as ours, that bad mistakes are being made someplace,' says Dr. Raymond Johnson, research chief of the Bureau of Sports Fisheries and Wildlife." . . .

"Wildlife and wilderness have always had the same social utility as art, music and literature, and should be treasured in the same way, for the same reasons," says Carl Buchheister, president of the National Audubon Society. 'This is a frustratingly difficult point of view to explain, but if it is not explained, much of our passionate interest in wildlife is unintelligible.'"

"One of the difficulties in trying to measure the aesthetic importance of wildlife (or anything else) is that we too often try to convert value, a subjective and varying concept, into price and cost, which are objective and fixed. The current budget for the rare-and-endangered-species program is \$394,000. Whether we pay the cost of it or not is a matter of public choice. However, the value of it is something else again. The utility of the Whooping Crane, its value, will not be the same for any two of us. It will depend upon temperament, experience, condition. It is an entirely personal thing, and so therefore it seems to me that it should be the final example of how it is between men and animals." . . .

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AUDUBON WILDLIFE FILM SERIES will begin its 1969-70 season with Karl H. Maslowski's film, "A Naturalist Afield". More than 60 species of birds, mammals, insects and amphibians are featured on the screen with sound recordings of their voices. Several albinos are shown, including a Red-tailed Hawk, Jefferson's salamander, Channel catfish and crow. Time-lapse photography of opening spring blossoms adds special beauty to this stimulating presentation. (See front page for details etc.)

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#### How To Keep The Blood Circulating

"While incubating, the King Penguins like to crowd up together, even if with no better object than to facilitate quarreling! Perhaps their squabbles are merely a method of keeping warm. At any rate, this morning I was watching a dozen birds all asleep, all snoring softly, and all swaying very gently back and forth as they snuggled their eggs. Then one bird waked up and without provocation, jabbed its sharp bill against the back of another's neck. The latter penguin, grunting vehemently, retaliated by delivering backhand blows with one wing, without turning to face its opponent. The fracas was enough to wake up all the others, which joined in with both rapiers and broadswords until every member of the group was exchanging thrusts and whacks. The melee died away about as quickly as it had flared up, and within a few minutes all the sitters were snoring and swaying once more."

from "Logbook For Grace" by Robert Cushman Murphy



BIRD ALERT  
for Eager Birders

The time has come to try our "wings" with a bird alert system. We plan to set up a network of telephone listings of interested persons and perhaps divide the listings into area code groups with a leader in each area. Only one call should be required of each person.

Dr. Evelyn Case has agreed to take charge of this endeavor. If you are interested in at least knowing what you're missing, whether you plan to dash out post haste or no, send your name, phone number plus area code, and time of day you can be reached to Dr. Case, 20537 Verde Vista Ln, Saratoga 95070. Also you may wish to indicate any special interests, such as White-tailed Kite nest for photography etc., all of which may or may not be ignored depending upon how active our listers are.

So as not to set off the hot line for an embarassingly common bird, it may be a good procedure to check the S.C.VAS bird list card (available from Dr. Case) and note the rarity of your find in the proper season.

Let's give it a try!

FOR SALE

Dawson's "Birds of California" in 4 volumes. Booklover's edition, raised design of gulls in gold-green, hardback. Very good condition. Price \$75.00.

Available for viewing at our Society's Library at the Cases home, tel. 867-4748. By member, Frances Dieterich 724 Maskingum Ave., Pacific Palisades, Ca. 90272.

A TIME FOR ODORS

"For there is a scent to everything even the snow, if you can only detect it — no two places, hardly any two hours, anywhere, exactly alike. How different the odor of noon from midnight, or winter from summer, or a windy spell from a still one!"

Walt Whitman

"How many of us are able to distinguish between the odors of noon and midnight, winter and summer, a windy spell and a still one? If man is generally less happy in the cities than in the country, it is because all these variations and nuances of sight and smell and sound are less clearly marked and lost in the monotony of gray walls and cement pavements." L. Yutang

REDTAIL ENCOUNTER: EYEBALL TO EYEBALL

Driving the Calaveras Reservoir Road, not far from the heart of the Al Wool country, while looking for Golden Eagles on a rainy afternoon, I saw a raptor make a fast down-hill swoop dead ahead, and disappear into a stand of deciduous oaks.

Coasting carefully about 200 yards in my bird-viewing all-purpose V.W. camper to the spot opposite where I thought he might have landed, there he was, an immature Redtail Hawk, 60 feet away, on the downhill side and perched at the same elevation.

Cautiously I lowered the right front window and slow-motioned my binoculars to attention, hoping to examine his tonsils. Very interesting! He was perched on a solid limb, with only talons, tail, and torso showing. Neck and head were hidden by a horizontal 4-5 inch branch.

I settled down for all of 60 seconds to wait him out, scarcely daring to breath when he lowered his head and peeked with one eye from under the limb. Not satisfied, he then very cautiously stretched himself to full height and peered over the branch, about half his head exposed, turning first one eye and then the other — each at high beam — upon me. We confronted each other, at least two minutes, without an eyelash moving, or quarter given.

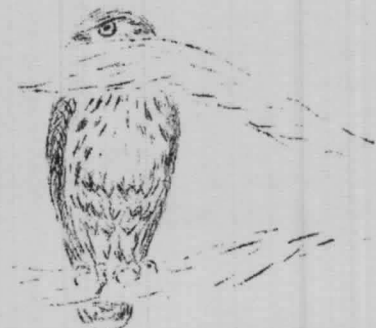
'Tis said a lover's eye will gaze an eagle blind. Such was the intent glare of this beady-eyed Redtail!

Thinking he might repeat such interesting behavior, I slowly tried to edge toward my tripod and camera gear. This snapped the magic spell. He took off in the rain, disappearing Great Horned Owl-fashion among the trees.

Question for the Redtail experts: If I'd had the wits to first pull the curtains on the driver's side to eliminate my silhouette, might he have tarried?

A New Member

Editor's Answer: Yes and no, but worth the try.



WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS:

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 Mrs. John wood, 25505 Soquel Rd., Los Gatos 95030  
 Caroline Davis, Membership Chairman

S.C.V.A.S. Officers and Chairmen 1969-1970

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	Mrs. Phyllis Klein, 4264 Newberry Ct, Palo Alto	327-4378
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" Wed. North:	Mrs. Kay McCann, 783 Garland, Palo Alto	327-4138
" Wed. South:	Mrs. Katherine Lintott, 17150 Buena Vista Ave, Los Gatos	356-4264

AVOCAT

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